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PORUGAL

The military leaders in Portugal continued to hold high-level meetings yesterday, but there is no clear sign that any action has been taken to replace the pro-Communist government of Prime Minister Vasco Goncalves.

The Revolutionary Council was called into session yesterday afternoon. At the end of an eight-hour meeting, it was announced that an officer with pro-Communist sympathies was reinstated as commander of the northern military region, that the functions of the military's Communist-dominated propaganda service were suspended pending an investigation, and that the Armed Forces General Assembly would meet next week to restructure the Revolutionary Council.

The Council session was preceded by a meeting between the three-man directorate and the chiefs of the general staffs of the armed forces. Press sources said army Chief of Staff Fabiao—the anti-Goncalves group's choice for prime minister—presented his proposed cabinet to Costa Gomes; the results of the meeting have not been announced.

Throughout the present crisis Costa Gomes has remained an enigma. He may now be seeking a face-saving formula for removing Goncalves without provoking armed conflict among factions of the armed forces. The decisions announced yesterday may be compromises engineered by Costa Gomes to placate the various factions and make a transfer of power more palatable. It is also possible, however, that these lengthy meetings are delaying tactics to drain the anti-Goncalves group of its energies and ensure the continuation of the present regime.

Whatever Costa Gomes' motivation, the net result of his efforts has been to provide Goncalves and his Communist supporters an opportunity to strengthen their positions. That, in fact, is what seems to be happening. Last week, the Communist Party had all but abandoned Goncalves; party secretary Alvaro Cunhal told a news conference that his party was prepared to accept alternative solutions to the present government. At a large Communist gathering in Evora on Sunday, however, Cunhal was again on the offensive, declaring that to change the Goncalves government would only aggravate the present crisis.

The Communists yesterday announced that they have joined in a united front with seven extremist revolutionary groups to carry out "offensive action" against the "reactionaries"—all parties and groups to their political right. The move seems calculated to rally support behind Goncalves and to divide and confound his opposition. The front said it favored a government program that combined the positions of the present government with those of the faction led by security forces chief Carvalho, who last week reportedly joined the Antunes group in calling for Goncalves' removal.

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Time appears to be on Goncalves' side. His opponents may already have lost so much momentum that they can no longer exclude him from the government entirely. If so, they may be prepared to accept him in a lesser capacity. Such a compromise would not only please Costa Gomes, but also the Communists, who would thereby retain a foothold in the government.

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GREECE

The government of Prime Minister Karamanlis announced yesterday that the death sentences imposed last Saturday on the three ringleaders of the 1967 military coup would be commuted to life imprisonment, once the appeals procedure is completed and the sentences are final.

The speed with which Karamanlis acted after he called his cabinet into special session suggests he is more concerned about heading off adverse reaction from the military than he is about criticism from the political opposition. He obviously thought that a prolongation of the suspense about whether the sentences would be carried out risked unrest and a possible reaction from supporters of the old military junta still in the military.

Opposition leaders have reacted angrily to the haste with which the government moved to announce the eventual commutation of the sentences. The opposition will try to make political capital out of the government's decision, but it does not have the votes to press the issue in parliament.

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USSR - MIDDLE EAST

The Soviet press has said little about Secretary Kissinger's latest round of shuttle diplomacy. Soviet diplomats also appear to be keeping their own counsel.

What little the Soviets have printed tends to minimize the significance of any new disengagement agreement and reiterates their stock theme that any agreement should be an integral part of an overall Middle East settlement. *Pravda* on Sunday, for example, belittled the Secretary's "tenth mission" to the Middle East and said it had only limited objectives.

The absence of direct comment reflects Moscow's ambivalence on the Secretary's trip. On the one hand, Moscow may view a new agreement as a positive factor that reduces the risk of war. It also may think an agreement will increase the prospects for the Geneva conference. On the other hand, the Soviets dislike Washington's dominance of the diplomatic process.

Soviet propaganda broadcasts to the Arabs have been less restrained and seem designed to limit US ability to gain points from an agreement. The Soviet broadcasts have said that Syrian and Palestinian interests will be ignored by a new agreement and have stressed that the US will grant Israel substantial new aid to reach an accord. The Soviets have chided Cairo for falling into the "snare" of separate agreements and have questioned the political concessions Egypt must make to regain territory.

The broadcasts have indicated Soviet uneasiness with the possibility that US technicians will be stationed in the Sinai. One radio commentary charged that the technicians will serve Israeli interests and expressed misgivings about their not operating under UN supervision. [redacted]

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